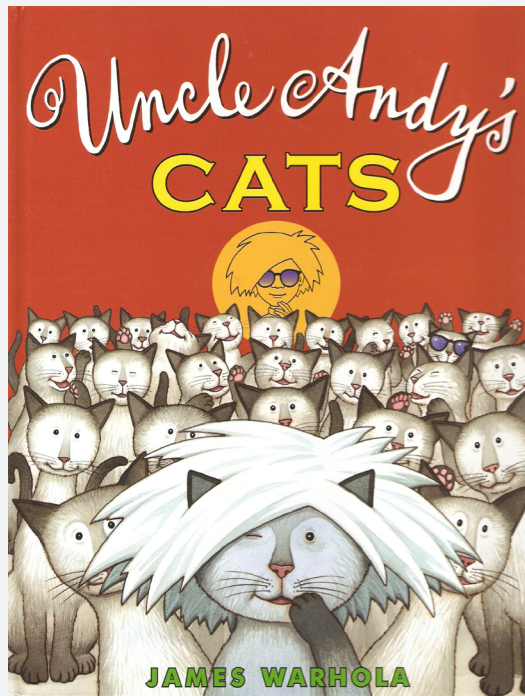


## Second Reaction: A Child's Brief Introduction to Andy Warhol

Warhola, James. *Uncle Andy's Cats*. New York: Putnam Juvenile, 2009.

Stacy Pollard



*Uncle Andy's Cats* received a lukewarm reception from most of the children in my classroom. The book was read to an audience of ten first grade students and a high school assistant. The students were anxious to serve as critics and listened attentively, but found themselves only remembering the basic events in the cats' lives. Though I was intrigued by the possibilities of a book that gives a glimpse into the life of someone as fascinating and eccentric as Andy Warhol, I was also disappointed by the lack of characterization present in the book.

The book has illustrations that are colorful and appropriate for any elementary student. The pictures give the audience a much greater sense of Andy Warhol than the words do, as he is hardly mentioned in the book.

The length of the book is also appropriate for any elementary student, though I

would anticipate intermediate-level students may want books with more challenging substance. My first graders were able to listen to the entire story and comprehend it without trouble.

After listening to the story, the students were asked to give their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of this book. We discussed the fact that "Andy" referred to the Pop Art icon Andy Warhol. The students, especially the high school assistant, thought that this made the book much more interesting. The strengths mentioned by the students included:

- It is a true story.
- It had a lot of cats.
- The author geared the book toward a young audience.

The weaknesses perceived by the students were:

- The ending was not happy enough.
- It did not tell enough about Andy Warhol.

Upon further questioning, I found that six of ten students felt that they learned a little bit about Andy Warhol. They knew that he painted, that he wrote a book about the Sams, and that he had wigs. In addition, four of ten students thought that they would want to learn more about this artist after reading this book.

In searching for more feedback, I had my own third grader read the story and offer his opinion. He summarized his view concisely: It is a good story for cat lovers, but not for learning about Andy Warhol.

In summary, the book seemed to be a decent children's book, but lacking in substance. The students walked away from the story with a very basic understanding of how quickly the cats multiplied and then were sold. This book would be good for elementary students who are already familiar with Andy Warhol, as it would give an alternate view of the man behind the art. It may also serve well as an introduction to the artist. As a source for learning about Andy Warhol, however, it would be ineffective.

### **About the Author**

**Stacy Pollard** is a first grade teacher at Meadowlawn Elementary in rural Monticello, Indiana. She has taught three grade levels in her tenure: fifth, third, and first. She earned a bachelor's degree from Purdue University in December 2000 and a master's degree from Indiana Wesleyan in 2009. This is her ninth year as a teacher in Twin Lakes School Corporation.